Leicester,
August 13/71.

Dear friend Webb,

Your letter of July 28. – when you had first heard of dear Mr. May's death – came to me in the very quick time of 10 days, & brought us all into renewed sympathy with you, & gave us demonstration of what we sufficiently, at least thoroughly, believed before – your intimate knowledge & your hearty love of that good man. Indeed his spirit & character were so clear, so transparent, so truly to be read of all men of discernment, & (more than commonly) by even the "wayfaring man," that it cd. not be otherwise than that you would "discern his spirit", and feel drawn tow^d. him. His departure makes a great difference to some lives here, – to many, I doubt not – and I suppose will never cease to. I can't think that this world will ever seem to me again worth what it was to me when my father and S. J. M. were alive, & within my reach; and I think that the latter's departure has made more difference to me than the former's. For my father had fully reach^d. the goal – had exceeded 93 years of age – had (apparently) entirely completed his work. But we were not thinking so of S. J. M.; ~~had~~ but were weaving him in with many a plan & hope of the future, seeing how useful he continued to be in all directions, & that his influence was never stronger or wider or more valued than during the years since he disconnected himself from the immediate charge of the Syracuse Church. He had, however, I have myself no doubt, worked far too hard in those very years, – attempting too much, doing too much – travelling, & exposing himself in many ways, when he should have spared himself & rested

But who shall say what hastens, what delays, "the inevitable hour"? And, if hearts are wrung, and hopes disappointed, & plans defeated, - why, may it not be better, aye best, all round, that it be so. We cannot deny that it may be so. Is not the strong preponderance of evidence on the side that it must be so? At my time of life, mere sentimentalism, as to life & its hereafter, have quite disappeared; but I think I am steadily growing in the conviction & confidence of that hereafter, - not perhaps for every soul, necessarily; but, for most souls, necessarily, - unless we are prepared to allow failure and defeat to the Creation of the Human Race, and an incalculable waste & loss of moral & spiritual power in that creation. Yet, it may be replied, Who are we to judge of what is, or is not, failure in such case? The question, for some reason, does not trouble me, nor do I feel it presumptuous or wrong to form an opinion in ~~such~~ the case. The power to weigh, to balance, to compare, & so to judge of means & results, - to construct a probable (nay, assured) whole, from the sight of a distinct & definite part, is given us; - and given not to foil or mislead, that I am bound to believe. I not only hope, but I feel a very strong assurance, that he has got beyond all these speculations, & where many (not all) uncertainties are solved; and if indeed it be that he rejoins the society of others, once in the flesh, it will be less of a change to him, there will be less strangeness in ~~the~~ his present state, than it would be to remain in a world, where all old friendships & intimacies were fast breaking up, and it was becoming every day as a new & unknown world to him.

I am glad you rec^d. the papers also - I think I sent you 2 Syrac. papers and a Chr^n. Register. The long sketch of Mr. M.'s Life, in the Syr. "Standard", was written by one of the editors, Mr. Fitch, who had (like Pres. A. D. White of Cornell University) grown up from a young man under the influence of Mr. May's ministry & life. I was told, at Syrac., that but a very small portion of it, much less than a column as it stands printed, was written out when Mr. M. died; — tho' he Mr. F. had collected the materials for the whole. The death occurrd. at 10 P.M. Saturday July 1. Mr. Fitch summoned to his aid his printing-office force, and applied himself to the work, early Sunday morning, of writing out his sketch, — so that it might appear in Monday morning's paper. And it was done; every word of it put in type, & much the greater part of it composed & written, on that Sunday, July 2d, day, eve, & night. That, for any editor, & with the resources of a paper in a smaller, inland city, was certainly a notable achievement; — A week ago, I also maild. to you the Syracuse "Memorial Pamphlet", — made up largely of what you had seen already in the papers, but with some new matter. I hope you will get it; though I did such a blundering thing about it, (as also about 2 others, sent to my uncle in Birmingham & to Mary Estlin,) that I shan't be surprised if neither of them reaches the person intended it. I was mailing several others, to friends in this country; and, forgetting that a part were to go abroad — no! not that, but forgetting that the foreign ones should have additional postage stamps (something that you, Irishman as you are, wd. never have forgotten) I just put the same Two Cent stamp upon each! After they were gone beyond recal, I recollected my negligence; and I fear you will never see the pamphlet; but if it does come to you, with an extra weight of postage upon it, you will do me a great favor if you will call upon my wife for the amt., when she is in Dublin, — as she soon will be, I suppose, now; and I shall ask her to pay you; — a small sum indeed, but I ought to be mulcted in a good deal more.

Four days later than the arrival of yr. of 28th, came yrs. of 29th. I am very glad you sent a paper to Harriet Martineau, & offered my letter, if it wd. be of service. And I thank you, particularly, for naming to her the proposed Memoir,

& asking her aid in it. All just right, & I thank y
for all. I had always been an admirer of H. M., — wh
is calld. a "constant reader"; — tho' her espousal of the Com
Positivism had appeared to me to show, either a weakness i
her logic, or too great confidence in logic itself, or in me
philosophic deductions. This did not make, nor has anyt
ever made, any difference in my admiration & respec
for her character, & for her incessant, extraordinary, al
incredible industry, & for her pre-eminent services to th
welfare of Mankind. Most persons in her condition of he
would have died long ago, — or shelved themselves in a he
& useless state. She is a wonder, & a monument of wh
a human being, in firm or infirm health, is capable. I
indeed still sorry that she should ever have allowe
herself to think, or say, that "our Country had been
by the act of one of its Naval officers, whether that
were defensible or otherwise. From most (or many) per
I shd. have said "the *wish* was father to the thought"; bu
never thought that of her. All the more, for that reason,
it likely to be damaging to us, because seeming to be a
of despair, & abandonment almost of our cause, by an
undoubted friend. I wonder what she herself would sa
that sentiment, or phrase, now, if she should happen to re
— I hope she will respond favorably to yr. request, respect
memoir of S. J. M. Anything she might write would be re
with the greatest pleasure & gratitude; & would be ver
to be of great service, [Think of that drawer of prepared Obituaries!

We had considered about *the likeness* in the book; an
we can get *a good one*, shall not fail to have it, Tha
you for all your suggestions about *the Life*; and I hope
will make us many more; & you may think of som
other illustrative facts. I shall write to A. Wilkinson for
to him, if he doesn't send it. He & his wife have been o
journey the past fortnight. Just before they went, I
a *2d. visit* to Syracuse, to look over the manuscripts of S. J. M.,
in company with his daughter, & her Aunt, Miss Charl
Coffin, (who lived in Mr. May's family 20 years.)

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You recommend brevity in the Memoir; & ~~that~~ too agrees with the ideas of his friends here as express^d. on the day of the funeral; — a volume, it was said, of about the size of his "Anti Slavery Recollections" would be large enough; and to that end special effort will be made. I have had an excellent & most kindly letter from Eliz^th. P. Nichol concerning S. J. M. Early in Sept. W. L. G. is to be here; & we are to consult together as to the Memoir — & more particularly the Antisl: portion of it. The chief Editor, so to speak, of the book will be the Rev. T. J. Mumford, one of the Editors of the Chr. Register, a man who feels he owes nearly everything valuable in his life & position, in his faith & moral vision, to Samuel J. May — a man of spirit & temper akin to Mr. M.'s — one whom he greatly loved — & one whom his children are not only pleased, but desirous, to have perform that office. In the course of 2 or 3 weeks the 3 (of the Editing Comm^tee) — Mess. Emerson & Mumford besides myself — are to meet at my house for further & final action in regard to the plan, &c. of the book; — & then to work. Meantime we are seeking the materials in every direction we can. I wish you could meet Garrison here. It would be, to me, as good as "taking tea in Paradise". But I sorrow to hear that you are having more pain to endure than you yourself ever tell of. The same mail, that bro't yrs. of 28th., bro't your ~~[illegible]~~ pretty book to Bessie — wh. she will herself acknowledge, — a "Graphic", — and one of Mr. May's little books, (in Switz^d.) with its pretty pictures.) So you see how much Dublin contributes to the instruction & pleasure of Leicester.

— And I must thank you for those very striking lines of Dean Alford's. But, if we are forgotten here — it must be mostly by those who never knew us much; and, if those who knew us better, remember us, beyond, how much better!

Deborah's letter to Ade. has not come yet. I suppose it is because ~~he~~ Wilkinson is absent, & his letters have not been opened. — I w.^d gladly be remembered to, & by, James Haughton, with whom I once had some correspondence, & at whose house I was, several times, during my short visit to Dublin, in 1843. — The Leicester Proceedings (on the 4th July), with a far better report of the Speeches, are to be put in a thick pamphlet, a copy of which I mean to send to you. — Mrs. Bestody & daughter were not present at that celebration, nor at anything else in Leicester, for now over 8 months! Poor lady, — she has undergone great suffering in that time in the treatment of a tumour, of decidedly cancerous character, & wh. (her physician says) would have been a fully-developed cancer, if left to itself 2 months longer. She is now believed to be doing well, tho' weak yet. She is staying at a niece's house in Dorchester; & when she will be physically able to return to Leicester is still a question. — You will have rec.^d, before this, Ade's letter telling you about the neighbours' meeting at Dr Flint's house, on the 20th July, the Anniversary of Mr. Emerson's birthday, when, at precisely noon he became One Hundred Years old! She has also collected, she tells me, some documentary evidence of his age, in reply to your request. It is a matter of perfectly authentic record — not of tradition or recollection; & the family far too well known, in Westfield (Mass.) where he was born, in Norwich (Vermont), where his long, active life was mostly passed — & here, where he has lived almost 20 years, and been known for more than 30, to admit of any doubt. { I know, if I know anything, that my father was 93 yrs, 3 mos., & 19 days old, when he died. Are 6 to 7 years more, in any sensible degree, more incredible? }

I am astonish.^d at what you tell me of the British furore for Walt. Whitman. I have not been, it is true, an extensive reader of his. But when I see the kind of stuff which passes current for poetry, & thought, & imagination, — & what vagaries are accepted as proof of

The difficulties he alleges are real ones, — yet not to be avoided, by continuing to withhold the ballot from Woman. Corrupt Women are "inside politics" now, to use a phrase Godkin loves, — and long have been.

But I must thank you, for myself, for your intended gift to Cornell University. That would have pleased S. J. May much, too. — I think Godkin's criticisms on Woman Suffrage have been very serviceable, tho' not always in good temper or just.

genius, — among our people, — I cannot but think that the standard is too low to afford any test, and the true poets to be looked for elsewhere than by its canons. As I remember W. W., coarseness, vulgarity, & even ribaldry, are very considerable elements of his verse, — if verse it be. Bret Harte, among us, has been suddenly blown into fame, — & not wholly without reason, in my judgment; for there is genuine humour, & much originality, & much good taste, in his writings. We have another of these "popular" poets, — John Hay by name; — an imitator (servum pecus), & in my opinion a very disgusting writer who mistakes ~~puts~~ the blankest irreverence for wit, and startling language for strong. And another is just discovered, who is greatly be-praised now, — Joaquin Miller, hight — ("Phœbus, what a name", &c.) — of whom I can say nothing, having as yet scarcely seen any of his productions.

I think you would have enjoyed being here at our Fourth July Celebration. The day was lovely — the open-air gathering ~~was~~ picturesque — the people ~~were~~ attentive, interested, & well-behaved, all — the scene under the dinner tent really very fine, where 800 people took a [illegible] nice dinner together, and listened to speaking for 2½ hours afterward, & loth to go away then, — the fire-works in the evening, & the music of a Worcester Band (with these last 2 you could have dispensed, I dare say, — but they were a great delight to a multitude of children, ~~&~~ of all ages). Ade. came rather late to the gathering under the trees, for the morning exercises, but got a good seat, & immediately proceeded to knit, net, or crochet something, — & very soon bestowed her shawl upon her next neighbour, (for tho' the sun was very warm, there was a cool breeze stirring.) We would have had a good chair for you, and a carpet for y^r feet. But you tell us you "have no hope" of ever coming to us again! That is a very disappointing word to me; but I am learning what limitations surround us in this life!

But I must thank you, for myself, for your intended gift to Cornell University. That would have pleased S. J. May much, too. — I think Godkin's criticisms on Woman Suffrage have been very serviceable, tho' not always in good temper or just.

I thank you, again, for every word of your suggestions as to S. J. M.'s life; and I ask you, again, to send me any others you think of, and "advise" me as much as you please. But don't wonder at, nor think me unmindful, if I don't answer you very soon. This Memoir, added to full as much other work as I have strength for, or care to do, will prevent my writing many but actually business letters for a great while, I fear. I would gladly put it all (or ~~nearly~~ all save revision) - out of my hands, but that is not just now deemed admissible.

I had hoped to hear from Mr. May last eveg; but nothing has come for nearly a week. She knows apparently very little of her plans for seeing England & Scotland and I suppose will take Dublin on her way to Queenstown, - giving herself of course several days with you & Deborah, & Alfred & his wife.

Will you thank A. for a document he has recently sent me, setting forth what is desired by him & others in behalf of Ireland; - also for a very kind & pleasant letter, containing some "confessions" concerning himself, which enlarge my regard for his honesty, while they awaken sympathy on many grounds, & some regrets. But he is on the right track, - bravely working for the right - to obtain final solution of all difficulties & doubts. I suppose the Mr. Smyth who is named in the printed document he sends, is the same man who was so injured in Phenix Park at the Pro-Fenian demonstration there. That was an unfortunate affair for Irish conciliation. - I have lengthened out this at the expense of mine to my wife, wh. must be written before I sleep. - as I go away, for a week, tomorrow. Affly Yrs. S. May

I have several letters of yrs. not properly replied to; but I must not attempt that now. They are dated May 3, May 20, & June 19. Every one gave us pleasure.

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- And I must thank you for those very striking lines of Dean Alford's. Truly, if we are forgotten here - it must be mostly by those who never knew us much; and, if those who knew us better, remember us beyond, how much better!